Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) An apparatus for the automated processing of meat, comprising a conveyor belt transport element for transporting the meat, a cutting element for cutting and/or trimming the meat, a counter-surface for the cutting element and at least one control and/or regulating apparatus, which is in functional connection with the cutting element, characterized in that a threading element is mounted forwardly of the counter-surface adjacent the cutting element and directly above and in near contact with the conveyor belt transport element in a horizontal transport plane of the meat, said threading element being bent laterally from the counter-surface in the horizontal transport plane at a horizontal angle with respect to the counter-surface whereby an outer end of the threading element extends at least partially across and in said horizontal transport plane to at least partially lift one side of the meat prior to the meat reaching said counter-surface.

2. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, characterised in that the threading element is an integral component of the counter-surface.

3. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, characterized in that the threading element is constructed as an extension of the counter-surface.

4. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, characterized in that the threading element is a spatula-like plate element and has an elongated shape, rounded at said outer end in said horizontal transport plane.

5. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 4, characterised in that the plate element is chamfered at least on a side facing the meat.

6. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, characterized in that a unit consisting of the counter-surface and the threading element is constructed as swivellable from a position outside of said conveyor belt transport element to a position over said conveyor belt transport element, independently with respect to said conveyor belt transport element.

7. (previously presented) An apparatus according to 6, characterised in that the unit consisting of the counter-surface and the threading element is swivellable about at least one rotational axis.

8. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 6, characterised in that the unit consisting of the counter-surface and the threading element is movable in a linear direction.

9. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 8, characterised in that a deflector element is arranged behind the counter-surface in the direction of transport.

10. (currently amended) A method for the automated processing of meat, comprising the steps of:

transporting the meat into an area of a cutting element using a conveyor belt transport element,

running the meat up against a counter-surface before the meat reaches the cutting element,

cutting and/or trimming the meat by means of the cutting element and removing the meat,

characterized in that the meat is threaded by a threading element mounted forwardly of the counter-surface adjacent the cutting element and directly above and in near contact with the conveyor belt transport element in a horizontal transport plane of the meat, the threading element being bent laterally from the counter-surface in the horizontal transport plane at a horizontal angle with respect to the counter-surface whereby an outer end of the threading element extends at least partially across and in the horizontal transport plane, before running up against the counter-surface, wherein the meat is at least partially lifted by the threading element from one side thereof and then guided on to the counter-surface.

11. – 12. (Canceled).